

## **Babysitting, Tutoring, and Dating Advice by phoebenavarro**

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**Summary:**

An exploration of Dustin and Steve's friendship as the dust settles in the weeks following Eleven closing the gate to the Upside Down. Steve babysits, Dustin tutors, and they discuss Steve's love life.

## Babysitting, Tutoring, and Dating Advice

### Author's Note:

First time writing anything Stranger Things related ahhh! Sorry Nancy and Jonathan aren't actually in it, but they're discussed a lot. Kind of a fix it fic? Or my take on how stoncy could still happen after season two.

Find me on tumblr @phoebebenavarrro and talk to me about OT3 headcanons!!

Dustin tutoring Steve began casually, with Dustin spouting fun facts about science to Steve whenever Steve babysat him, which became a regular occurrence as things began to settle down again. Dustin liked Steve much better than other babysitters because they were actually friends, and Steve asked for significantly less pay than others. He'd do it for free if Ms Henderson would let him. A few days after the Snow Ball, Steve sat in the Henderson living room with Dustin. The TV was on in the background, but neither of them were paying attention to it.

"Seems like things are settling down," Steve commented.

"Yeah," Dustin agreed, "It's still a little weird though, cause like, El's back now, but it's also like she's not. We still can't hang out with her. Hopper won't let anyone but Mike go see her." Steve nodded.

"I know it sucks, but Hopper's got his reasons."

"I know," Dustin sighed, "At least El and Will are safe now. And we kicked those Demodogs' asses." He grinned.

"You guys sure did."

"So did you. Dude, you saved our lives multiple times- in the junkyard, in those tunnels, with Billy..." He trailed off.

"I took the brunt of the hits from him," Steve muttered. "I know I kept you kids safe, but when it came to the planning, I was absolutely useless." Dustin opened his mouth to reply, but Steve cut him off. "You don't need to say anything, I know I was. I couldn't keep up. Basically my entire life I've been cruising on my popularity and good looks, and I never bothered to use my brain. And now I'm really trying to, but I'm just... Behind."

"I thought I could just work hard and it would be fine, but all this monster-science-fiction shit has made me realize I can't do it by myself."

"I can help," Dustin offered, "If you want. I can teach you about science and whatever else. But I think we're done with the monster hunting. El closed the gate."

Steve shook his head slowly. "It's not just about that, I'm not even sure if I could cut it in college, but I at least want to apply and... I don't know. I just have this gut feeling that something could happen again, and I want to be prepared if it does. I've grown too attached to all you kids." Dustin beamed.

"You know, you could always play DND with us!"

"First of all, I don't think I'm ready to be that kind of nerd yet, and also I doubt Mike would be welcoming of me getting in on your sessions. It took him how long to warm up to Max? And I'm the asshole that dated his sister." Steve avoided mentioning Nancy around Dustin as much as possible, and Dustin didn't bring her up, out of sympathy or awkwardness, Steve didn't know. Things with Nancy were shifting, but Steve didn't know if he really understood the status of their relationship himself, so he was grateful Dustin didn't ask.

"Okay, maybe not now," Dustin replied, "But the invitation stands. I could DEFINITELY see you fitting into the party as our fighter."

"So I can get my ass kicked in a game too? No thanks."

"Protest all you want, Harrington, but one day you will join us. And

it will be awesome.”

Of course, Dustin was right. Not long after, Steve played his first session, which was met with much less resistance from Mike than he expected. Eleven’s return had made him much less confrontational. Will took a little while to warm up to Steve, but soon the entire gang settled in and had a great time. Steve enjoyed himself immensely, but he threw in several loving jabs at the kids to make sure they still knew he was cool. Dustin was a smart kid, and with his passion for science in tutoring Steve, Steve got the first A on a test in his entire high school career. Dustin insisted on hanging the test on his fridge, and he beamed with pride.

Steve finally felt like he had something good other than sports or dating going for him in his life, and it was an incredibly satisfying feeling.

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“Are you and Nancy back together?” Dustin asked one night during pizza-movie night, a now-weekly tradition between the two of them. Steve choked on the pizza he was chewing and coughed violently. Dustin clapped him on the back several times until he was able to breathe again.

“Sorry, what?” Steve asked, gasping for air and looking for a way to avoid that topic.

“You and Nancy.” Dustin repeated flatly.

“We never really broke up in the first place,” Steve said, hoping that would satisfy the kid.

“Okaaaay, but what about Jonathan?”

“What about him?” Dustin looked at Steve as if he was the dumbest person in existence.

“Jonathan and Nancy went on that road trip together, just the two of them, and Will told me they’ve been seeing each other since then.”

“Yeah, they have been.” Steve sighed; this was a much deeper, personal conversation than he wanted to have with Dustin tonight. “Listen, man, relationships are complicated. You have to do a lot of give and take. I’m still not really sure what we are, but Nancy wants to be with both me and Jonathan, and we’re both okay with it, so...” He shrugged. “We’re still figuring our situation out, I guess.”

“Huh,” Dustin said, “It never occurred to me that someone could date more than one person.”

“Most people don’t,” Steve replied, “Dating one person is hard enough.”

“Then why do it?”

“Because I really love Nancy. She made me want to be a better person, and when you find someone like that, you’ll do anything for them. Even if they break your heart.” Dustin was quiet for a while, and Steve started watching the movie again, but he was thinking about Nancy and Jonathan. Nancy truly had broken his heart, but then she and Jonathan came to him and... What? Apologized for? Explained? what happened between the two of them. And Steve broke down and cried (a combination of pent-up emotions, stress from literally saving the universe not long before, and head trauma from Billy beating his face in), and Nancy and Jonathan held him, stayed with him, and they all talked about what they were feeling. After that he didn’t really know what happened between the three of them, but they’d entered this configuration where Nancy was back with Steve, but still with Jonathan, and none of them really knew what the dynamic between Steve and Jonathan was, but it was definitely something.

It was weird, and they were still negotiating it, and they all were still healing, but Steve was happy.

“But... Jonathan?” Dustin asked, “You’re not exactly friends.” Steve shrugged.

“Yeah, but we’ve all been through something we can’t share with many other people. We’re still not friends, really, but we’ve bonded. And that’s enough for now.” Dustin appeared satisfied with the response. “Listen, we’re still figuring it out, so don’t go telling people about this, alright? Besides, you don’t need to be worrying about this kind of stuff. Dating gets more complicated as you get older. Right now, you just need to find a girl you like who is nice to you.”

“I won’t tell anyone,” Dustin said, “I’m glad things are working out for you, though.” Steve nodded thanks. He was glad too.

“What about you?” Steve asked, “Are you still into Max?” Dustin shook his head.

“No. I don’t know if I ever liked her, really. I didn’t even know her then.” Steve nodded in understanding. “Plus, her and Lucas are pretty perfect for each other, so...” Dustin grew quiet.

“Don’t get down on yourself,” Steve said, “You’ll find someone, and even if you don’t, being single is not the end of the world. Especially in eighth grade, I mean, Jesus.” Dustin chuckled a bit. “You’ve got some great friends, and you’re basically a genius, so don’t sweat it.” Dustin smiled.

“Thanks Steve.”

Tews jumped up next to Dustin and meowed loudly, demanding attention.

“See?” Steve said, “Tews agrees with me.” Dustin laughed, and they went back to their movie.